

Appl. No. 09/998,895
Amdt. dated September 2, 2009
Reply to Final Office Action of April 2, 2009

PATENT

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

This Amendment is in response to the Final Office Action mailed April 2, 2009. Claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 9-11, 13-15, 20, 21, 23-25, 30, 31, 33-36, 41 and 44-52 were pending in the present application and have been rejected.

Applicants have amended claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 11, 14, 15, 24, 25, 41, 45, and 47 and added claim 54. Applicants submit that no new subject matter has been introduced by the amendments or the new claim. Claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 9-11, 13-15, 20, 21, 23-25, 30, 31, 33-36, 41, 44-52, and 54 remain pending in the present application after entry of this submission. Reconsideration of the rejected claims is respectfully requested.

THE CLAIMS

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 9-11, 13-15, 20, 21, 23-25, 30, 31, 33-36, 41 and 44-52

Claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 9-11, 13-15, 20, 21, 23-25, 30, 31, 33-36, 41 and 44-52 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Cheng (U.S. Patent No. 6,067,548) (hereinafter "Cheng") in view of SiteMinder Policy Server Operations Guide, Version 4.0 (hereinafter "SiteMinder"), and further in view of McNally et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,823,513) (hereinafter "McNally"). Applicants respectfully disagree.

Claim 1 recites among other features:

1. A computer-implemented method for using workflows to perform a task, the method comprising:
 - associating each workflow of a plurality of workflows with a corresponding domain of a plurality of domains in an identity system, each domain of said plurality of domains comprising one or more entities and each workflow of said plurality of workflows using different predefined set of steps to perform the task;
 - receiving a request to perform said task that affects at least one identity profile associated with an entity in said identity system;
 - determining from said plurality of domains, a domain that includes said entity with which said at least one identity profile is associated;
 - determining from said plurality of workflows, a workflow associated with said domain and capable of performing said task;
 - performing said workflow for said task;
 - wherein said performing comprises executing said predefined set of steps of said workflow to perform said task; and

Appl. No. 09/998,895
Amdt. dated September 2, 2009
Reply to Final Office Action of April 2, 2009

PATENT

said request includes an identification of said at least one identity profile.
(Applicants' claim 1, as amended)

As recited in claim 1, each workflow of a plurality of workflows is associated with a corresponding domain of a plurality of domains in an identity system where each domain comprises of one or more entities. Each of these workflows performs the same task but different predefined set of steps are used by each workflow for performing that task.

Further, as recited in claim 1, upon receiving a request to perform the task that affects an identity profile, the method of claim 1 determines, a) from the plurality of domains, a domain that includes the entity with which the identity profile is associated, and b) from the plurality workflows, a workflow that is associated with the determined domain and that can perform the requested task. The determined workflow is performed by executing its predefined set of steps for performing the requested task. Therefore, for performing tasks that affect an identity profile of a domain only the workflows that are associated with that domain can be used.

Such features of claim 1 may be used for example in complex systems where the identity system stores information about different organizations including the companies, their suppliers, partners, and employees. Each of these organizations needs to perform various tasks on the information stored in the identity system. But for performing a particular task each organization may have different workflow procedures and processes for performing that particular task. The different organizations (or users of the identity system) can define different workflows according to their requirements and the workflows can then be associated with their corresponding domains with which their workflows must be used. The "associating" in claim 1 recites how workflows performing the same task can be associated with domains. Upon receiving a task request, the "determining from said plurality of domains, a domain", and the "determining from said plurality of workflows, a workflow" features allow determining the domain and the associated workflow to be used for performing that task. This determined workflow is the workflow that is associated with the domain of the identity profile identified in the task request. For example, a user of the identity system namely, supplier A may use one method for performing a task such as adding a new user to its relevant domain (i.e., the domain containing information related to supplier A). Another user of the identity system namely, supplier B may use a different method for performing the same task. Different workflows can

Appl. No. 09/998,895
Amdt, dated September 2, 2009
Reply to Final Office Action of April 2, 2009

PATENT

then be defined for suppliers A and B and associated with their respective domains with which each of those must be used. Since the task request includes identification of the identity profile that it affects, the domain comprising the entity with which that identity profile is associated can be determined and then the workflows associated with that domain and capable of performing the task can be determined. (See specification page 2: line 13 to page 3: line10.)

Applicants submit that none of the references Cheng, SiteMinder, and McNally either individually or in combination teach such features.

The portions of Cheng col. 11:59-27, col. 3:15-col. 5:16, col. 6:40-col. 7:67 and col. 13:9-col. 16:10 and col. 16:10-65 referred to in the Final Office Action do not teach the features of claim 1.

The Final Office Action alleges that col. 11:59-27 of Cheng teaches the "associating" feature of claim 1. Applicants respectfully disagree. Firstly, this portion of Cheng has no mention of workflows. Further, Applicants fail to see how the "unique identifier for a domain" described in this section of Cheng equates to the "associating" feature of claim 1. This portion of Cheng describes servers, domains, organizations within a domain, globally unique identifiers for the domains and organizations, and updates to the organizational information. This portion of Cheng seems to suggest that domains can contain multiple organizations and while domains have globally unique identifiers, organization names are unique only within the domain. Therefore, a universally unique identifier (UUID) for the organization is the name of the organization combined with the globally unique identifier of the domain that contains the organization. There is however no mention of workflows or any teaching or suggestion of associating workflows with a domain, let alone workflows that perform the same tasks associated with different domains, as recited in claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants submit that this section of Cheng does not teach the "associating" feature of claim 1.

Additionally, as discussed in the previously filed response (filed on 16th December 2008), the other cited portions of Cheng namely col. 3:15-col. 5:16, col. 6:40-col. 7:67 and col. 13:9-col. 16:10 and col. 16:10-65 also do not teach or suggest the features of claim 1.

For example, the virtual links in Cheng associate or relate one member object to another member object in the organization, which is not equivalent to associating workflows

Appl. No. 09/998,895
Amdt. dated September 2, 2009
Reply to Final Office Action of April 2, 2009

PATENT

with domains. The virtual links between the member objects are defined using an expression so that the relationship between member objects can be resolved dynamically by evaluating the expression. For example, from column 14 of Cheng, the script EXECUTE BY manager_of \$INITIATOR_OF_PROCESS includes a virtual link "manager_of" that defines the relationship between the manager_of and the initiator of the flow of the process. Evaluation of this expression for a member such as M will verify whether M is the manager of the initiator of the process and thereby authorized to execute the step of the workflow process. Accordingly, Applicant submits that virtual links in Cheng are for linking or associating two members, as in associating X as a manager of Y. Using this association (or expression), a script specifies the members (for example, manager_of) who can perform a step of the workflow process. Therefore, instead of including a name(s) of a member(s) authorized to perform a step of the workflow, the script specifies a relationship expression that can be evaluated dynamically to identify members authorized to perform the step. Additionally, this association between members in Cheng is for identifying members authorized to perform a step of the workflow and not for identifying workflows from a set of workflows to perform a task. Cheng lacks the limitation in claim 1 of associating a workflow with a domain, which is required to be able to identify the workflows that may be used to perform a task affecting the identity profiles of the entities of the domain. More specifically, Cheng does not teach or suggest at least the feature recited in claim 1 of associating each of a set of workflows with one or more domains, where each workflow uses different predefined set of steps to perform the same task.

The Final Office Action acknowledges that Cheng does not teach the "determining from said one or more domains, a domain . . ." and the "determining from said set of workflows, a workflow . . ." features of claim 1 but asserts that these features are taught by SiteMinder at pages 235-237, 302-304, and 325-328. Applicants respectfully disagree.

SiteMinder also does not cure the deficiencies of Cheng. SiteMinder portions are related to controlling a user's access to protected resources in a policy domain by resolving policies in the policy domain. In response to a user's request to access a protected resource the policy that specifies the user and the protected resource is resolved to determine whether the user can access the protected resource. This is completely different from the features of claim 1

Appl. No. 09/998,895
Amdt. dated September 2, 2009
Reply to Final Office Action of April 2, 2009

PATENT

discussed above that are related to determining the domain and the associated workflow that can perform a requested task. The SiteMinder portions cited in the Final Office Action do not appear to have any relation to workflows, especially workflows that use predefined set of steps to perform a requested task affecting an identity profile.

It appears that the Final Office Action is equating the “policies” and “actions” in SiteMinder to the “workflows” and “task” respectively, in claim 1. Applicant submits that this is incorrect for at least the reasons discussed below. A workflow recited in claim 1 comprises a predefined set of steps to perform a task. For example, a workflow may comprise a predefined set of steps to perform a task such as adding a user, deleting a user, or making changes to a user’s identity profile (see specification page 36: lines 6-8 and Table 1). On the other hand, as described in SiteMinder Chapter 12 pg. 325, policies define how users interact with resources. Policies bind users, resources, and actions triggered when the users access the resources. The policies or rules described in SiteMinder are used to determine whether the user can access a particular resource or not. SiteMinder does not appear to teach or suggest anything about policies comprising predefined set of steps for performing tasks that affect an identity profile. In fact, the “policies” in SiteMinder do not perform any tasks equivalent to the “tasks” in claim 1. Additionally, SiteMinder does not teach or suggest anything about multiple workflows performing the same task. More specifically, SiteMinder does not teach or suggest each of a set of workflows comprising different predefined set of steps for performing the same task as in claim 1.

The Final Office Action's comparison of “actions” in SiteMinder to the “task” in claim 1 is also incorrect. As described in SiteMinder in Chapter 12 page 325, a policy is created to link users, resources, and actions that should take place when those users access the specified resources. The actions take the form of SiteMinder responses that are described in Chapter 11 of SiteMinder. Thus, the “actions” in SiteMinder are actually responses to a user’s request for a resource as specified in the policy. When a user specified in a policy attempts to access a resource identified in the policy’s rule, the system in SiteMinder resolves the policy to determine what “action” should be triggered in response to the user’s request. Further, the “actions” that are triggered are associated with the user’s accessibility of the resource such as allowing/denying

Appl. No. 09/998,895
Amdt. dated September 2, 2009
Reply to Final Office Action of April 2, 2009

PATENT

the user access to the requested resource, customizing the content sent to the user and the user's session time, redirecting the user to other resources, etc. Pages 304, 325 of SiteMinder list the different types of actions or responses in SiteMinder:

allowing/denying access to resource (WebAgent-OnAccept or WebAgent-OnReject),

customizing user's session time when access allowed (e.g., WebAgent-OnAuthAccept-Session-Idle-Timeout),

redirecting the user to other resources when allowed/denied (e.g., WebAgent-OnAccept-Redirect, WebAgent-OnReject-Redirect),

customizing the content the user receives (e.g., WebAgent-OnAccept-Text, WebAgent-OnReject-Text).

None of the "actions" or responses described in SiteMinder appears to be related to performing any actions or tasks that affects an identity profile

Additionally, claim 1 specifically recites receiving a request to perform a task. Since an "action" in SiteMinder is a response to a user's request, there is no teaching in SiteMinder of receiving a request to perform the response or action. Further, claim 1 recites several features such as "determining from said set of domains a domain . . ." and "determining of a workflow associated with said domain . . ." based upon the requested task. The "actions" in SiteMinder do not appear to initiate any such determining steps as in claim 1.

Based upon the above, Applicants submit that a policy in SiteMinder is not the same as a workflow recited in claim 1 and that an action in SiteMinder is not the same as the task recited in claim 1. Applicants therefore submit that SiteMinder does not teach the "determining from said one or more domains, a domain . . ." and the "determining from said set of workflows, a workflow . . ." features of claim 1 and accordingly does not cure the deficiencies of Cheng.

McNally also fails to cure the deficiencies of Cheng and SiteMinder. Accordingly, Applicants submit that even if Cheng, SiteMinder, and McNally were combined as suggested by the Office Action, even then the combination would not render claim 1 obvious.

Appl. No. 09/998,895
Amdt. dated September 2, 2009
Reply to Final Office Action of April 2, 2009

PATENT

Further, Applicants submit that there is no motivation to combine Cheng, SiteMinder, and McNally. The Final Office Action asserts that Cheng, SiteMinder, and McNally are all directed toward policy and identify management for workflows and that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to combine SiteMinder, McNally and Cheng, since it would have been obvious to combine the known prior art elements of a workflow system with rules corresponding to identity profiles (Cheng), with an identity system associating users with domains (SiteMinder). Applicants respectfully disagree at least for the reasons discussed below.

SiteMinder does not describe anything about workflows and multiple workflows each of which comprise different predefined set of steps to perform the same task. SiteMinder is primarily related to determining user's accessibility to resources and uses policies that define users, resources and responses to the user's request for those resources. As discussed above with respect to claim 1, the policy in SiteMinder is not equivalent to workflow. A policy in SiteMinder links users, resources, and actions that must take place when a user specified in the policy requests the resources specified in the policy. On the other hand, Cheng does not describe anything about policies and policy domain. Cheng is related to organization modeling and management of organization objects and describes workflow systems in the context of systems that can be benefitted from the organization modeling of Cheng. A workflow in Cheng is described as providing a framework on which multiple tasks and applications are integrated to form a network of steps to accomplish a business process. (See Cheng columns 13 and 14). This is not equivalent to the policy described in SiteMinder. Therefore, Applicants submit that the workflows in Cheng and the policies in SiteMinder are not equivalent and accordingly one of ordinary skill in the art would not have considered it obvious to combine the two references on the basis of the workflows in Cheng and policies in SiteMinder.

Appl. No. 09/998,895
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Reply to Final Office Action of April 2, 2009

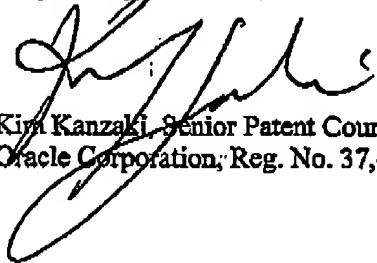
PATENT

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance and an action to that end is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 650-326-2400.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachments
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